

DECISION RECORD AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
EA-NM-060-01-071
NM 104009

Recommendation: I recommend that the proposed action by Thorton Operating Corporation for installation of a saltwater disposal pipeline be approved as mitigated for 30 years, subject to the terms and conditions in 43 CFR 2800; rental payments as determined by 43 CFR 2803.1-2; and the attached standard stipulations for buried pipelines. This action will affect the following public lands:

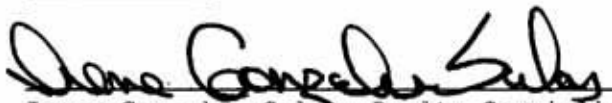
New Mexico Principal Meridian

T. 13 S., R. 29 E., N.M.P.M.
Section 26: NWNW;
Section 27: N2NE, SWNE, S2NW;
Section 28: SENE, NESE.

Authority for this action is Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, subject to the terms and conditions in 43 CFR 2801

Rationale for recommendation: The proposed action would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. Portions of the subject lands and adjacent lands have been used for similar purposes and all present and potential uses and users have been considered.

Prepared by:

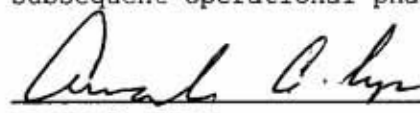

Irene Gonzales-Salas, Realty Specialist

3-6-01
Date

Decision: The recommendation and rationale are adopted as my decision.

Finding of No Significant Impact: The impact of the proposed action and alternatives to minority or low-income populations or communities has been considered and no significant impact is anticipated. Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, I have determined that impacts are not expected to be significant and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Compliance and Monitoring: The construction phase of this proposed action and subsequent operational phases will be monitored as per regulation.


Larry D. Bray
Assistant Field Manager
Lands and Minerals

3/8/01
Date

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Roswell Field Office
ROSWELL, NM 88201

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
EA# NM-060-01-0071
Right-of-Way NM 104009

Applicant: Thornton Operating Corporation

Roswell, NM 88201

Location: T. 13 S., R. 29 E., N.M.P.M.
Section 26: NWNW;
Section 27: N2NE, SWNE, S2NW;
Section 28: SENE, NESE.

Preparer: Irene Gonzales-Salas

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Need for the Proposed Action

The proposed action is needed to develop the mineral leases and transport produced water to a SWD Well facility.

B. Conformance with Land Use Plan

The purposed action is in conformance with the approved Roswell Resource Management Plan (RMP), and is consistent with Bureau policy and guidance.

C. Relationship to Statues, Regulations, or Other Plans

The proposed action does not conflict with any known State or Local planning or zoning ordinance. The authority for this action is the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as Amended.

II. BACKGROUND, PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. BACKGROUND/PROPOSED ACTION

On May 15, 2000, Thornton Operating Corporation submitted a right-of-way application for a surface pipeline right-of-way. On September 28, 2000 Monies per Category Determination Decision was received at the Roswell Field Office.

Thornton Operating Corporation proposes to construct, operate and maintain a 3-inch polyethylene pipe surface saltwater disposal pipeline to transport produced water from the McClellan Federal Com. No. 1 Well to a saltwater disposal well facility in NE1/4SE1/4 of Section 28, T. 13 S., R. 29 E. Total proposed pipeline length would be approximately 7,500 feet. Initially operating pressure would be 40 B/d, ultimately 800 B/d. No related

appurtenance are anticipated.

A width of 30 feet is requested for the right-of-way to get equipment down the right-of-way. The applicant has requested the proposed pipeline be installed on the surface.

The location of the proposed action is in Chaves County, New Mexico. The legal land description is:

T. 13 S., R. 29 E., N.M.P.M.
Section 26: NWNW;
Section 27: N2NE, SWNE, S2NW;
Section 28: SENE, NESE.

A right-of-way 30 feet wide by 7,500 feet long yields 5.166 acres (1.421 of a mile).

C. Alternatives

1. No Action

Under this alternative the application would be rejected.

2. Bury Pipeline

Under this alternative the entire pipeline would be buried.

3. Change the Alignment--Reroute the Project

There are no alternate routes which would have significantly less impacts than or any clear advantages over the proposed action. Therefore the alternative of changing the location of the project is not analyzed further.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

General Setting. The proposed pipeline is located approximately 19 miles east of the Pecos River Bridge on Hwy 31. This point is at Mile Post 20.5 where Jemina Road intersects with Highway 31:

0.0 Turn left (north) on Jemina Road and proceed in a Northerly and then Westerly direction for a total of 2 miles.

2.0 Turn right (North) on Teresa Road and proceed for 6.5 miles to the McClellan Federal Com. #2.

7.5 Turn left (West) access road for .3 miles.

7.8 Turn left (South) to location of McClellan Fed. #3.

7.9 McClellan Federal No. drillsite.

Both the surface and mineral estates are in public ownership on the portion in Section 22. An inspection of the Master Title Plats revealed the following title information.

Oil and Gas Lease - NM 2824 currently leased to McClellan Oil Corporation.

The Master Title Plats revealed the following rights-of-way:

NM 90313 Road Right-of-way and NM 92007 Powerline right-of-way

No mining claims are recorded within Sec. 26, 26, 28, T. 13 S., R. 29 E., N.M.P.M.

The regional industries are ranching, oil and gas development and seasonal hunting.

Affected Resources. The following critical elements have been evaluated and are either not present or are not affected by the proposed action or the alternatives in this EA:

- Air Quality
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
- Farm Lands (Prime and Unique)
- Floodplains
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Threatened or Endangered (T&E) Species (plants & animal)
- Wastes, Hazardous and/or Solid
- Water Quality, Drinking and Ground
- Wetlands and Riparian Zones
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

A. Soils

This soil group is described in the Soil Survey of Chaves County, New Mexico - Southern Part Page 42.

Permeability of the Roswell Jalmar Complex is Ector soils is moderate. Available water capacity is very low. Effective rooting depth is 60 inches or more. Runoff is very slow, and the hazard of water erosion is slight. The hazard of soil blowing is severe. Slopes are 0 to 15 percent.

B. Vegetation

The native vegetation in the area is sand dropseed, little bluestem, sand bluestem, three awn, sandbur, shinnery oak, sand sagebrush, and yucca. The mean annual precipitation is 12 to 13 inches.

C. Range

The proposed project is located within the following grazing allotment:

- Allotment
- Bogle Ltd
- P. O. Drawer 460
- Dexter, NM 88230

D. Wildlife

Wildlife species utilizing this area for habitat include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, coyote, fox, rabbits, kangaroo rats, pocket gophers, prairie rattlesnakes, as well as a variety of songbirds, dove, quail, and raptors.

No known special status species or critical habitat occur within the project area or would be affected by the proposed action.

E. VRM/Recreation

The subject lands are within a Class IV VRM area. In a VRM Class IV area, contrast caused by a management activity may attract attention and be a dominate feature of the landscape. The proposed project is located an area where numerous oil and gas activities are ongoing.

Recreational use is varied from severely limited to nonexistent. The small amount of recreational use in the proposed project area primarily involves seasonal hunting activities. Animals hunted include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, dove, quail, coyote and rabbit.

F. Archaeology

During the cultural inventory of the proposed right-of-way, one prehistoric site (LA 129787) was newly recorded and one previously recorded site (LA 107809) was encountered.

Site LA 107809 was treated and no further treatment should be necessary.

Site LA 129787 is undetermined with subsurface testing necessary to determine eligibility.

IV. Environmental Impacts

Impacts of the Proposed Action. Impacts from the proposed action are minimal and short-term in nature. Temporary soil and vegetative disruption would occur during installation of the pipeline. The pipeline as proposed would minimize soil and surface disturbance by installing the pipeline on the surface. Removal of vegetation along the right-of-way will not take place. Some vegetation would be crushed by vehicles during installation/maintenance activities. A reduction in AUMs would not occur.

Impacts from the proposed construction activity may cause temporary disruption of wildlife activity within the immediate vicinity of the project area, but there is sufficient habitat in the area to minimize the impact. More mobile species such as small mammals and birds would temporarily leave the site during actual construction/maintenance activities but should return in a short period of time.

Visual resources (VRM Class IV) would not be significantly affected. Impacts from the proposed construction activity would have minimal impacts of the current recreational uses of the area. From the aspects of safety and due

to seasonal hunter use, the pipeline as proposed would increase the risk to human life and property as well as increase the potential of damage to the pipeline by hunters.

Archaeological site LA 129787 would be adversely affected by construction and maintenance activities.

The Roswell RMP states that pipelines shall be buried unless there are topographic constraints or that bury the pipeline would cause considerably more damage to the environment than is typical of buried pipeline.

Impacts of Alternatives

Alternative 2. Bury the entire pipeline. Removal of vegetation along the right-of-way would take place. Soil and rock movement would occur primarily during construction activities. Some soil loss will occur from soil blowing winds, as a natural result from the stripping of vegetation and exposing of the soils during construction. Construction of a buried pipeline would result in approximately 5.166 acres vegetation would be depleted but should return in 2 or 3 growing seasons. Runoff from areas with a 2 percent slope or greater may result in gullies across the denuded strip of land.

Impacts to wildlife from the proposed construction activity would be about the same as the impacts described for installation the pipeline on the surface.

Impacts from the proposed construction activity would affect ground-dwelling species, but there is sufficient habitat in the area to minimize the impact. More mobile species such as small mammals and birds would temporarily leave the site during actual construction activities and should return in a short period of time.

Visual resources would not be significantly affected.

Recreational use is varied from severely limited to nonexistent. The small amount of recreational use in the proposed project area primarily involves seasonal hunting activities. Animals hunted include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, dove, quail, coyote and rabbit. The proposed right-of-way will have minimal impacts on the current recreational uses of the area.

Archaeological site LA 129787 would be adversely affected by construction and maintenance activities.

Mitigating Measures

Archaeological sites LA 129787 must be avoided.

Residual Impacts

A slight possibility of pipeline rupture will exist for the life of the project, which could result in negative localized impacts to air, water, soil and vegetation, wildlife and livestock.

Past industrial activities in the Pecos Valley include dispersed oil and gas development and cattle grazing, trends which have continued to the present. These surface disturbing activities have collectively altered resources such as air quality, vegetation, soil, water and wildlife. These trends will continue into the foreseeable future, with some modifications, causing similar impacts.

The proposed action is located in an area with sufficient quantities of natural gas to assume near maximum development - one well per 320 acres (or 160 acres), each with access road, pad and pipeline - which would involve similar surface impacts. While the effects of this individual proposed action will likely be minimal, the potential exists for negative cumulative impacts to any or all of the affected resources by the combination of past, present and expected future land uses.

V. Consultation and Coordination

The comments and suggestions expressed during the consultation have been incorporated into this EA.